

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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USIAC

INA FOR NALLE; IOA FOR BORK

DEPARTMENT (NEA/ARN) PASS TO AMBASSADOR PICKERING

E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJECT: NEW CENTER

REF: OUR 10061, USIA 31716

1. HERE ARE LATEST EVENTS LEADING TO LANDLORD'S REFUSAL GO AHEAD WITH PROJECT. AMBASSADOR REQUESTED YOU BE INFORMED OF STEPS WE HAVE TAKEN INUATTEMPT PRESERVE NEW CENTER BUT WHICH HAVE BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL.

2. WHILE AMBASSADOR WAS SEEING KEOGH, LANDLORD TOLD PAO THAT JORDAN INSURANCE COMPANY BOARD DIRECTORS HAD VOTED NOT RPT NOT PROCEED WITH PROJECT. HE CITED OUR ATTEMPTS CUT OVERALL COSTS AT WHAT BOARD BELIEVES WAS THEIR EXPENSE,INCLUDING FIVE TO THREE YEAR ADVANCE RENTAL REDUCTION AND CUTTING FIFTEEN PER CENT AIR CONDITIONING/HEATING CHARGE TO PRO RATA FEE, TO BOTH OF WHICH THEY RELUCTANTLY AGREED IN ORDER TO HAVE US IN BUILDING. LATEST REQUEST TO GIVZMBACK SPACE ON TWO OF THREE FLOORS WAS, AS HE PUT IT, STRAW THAT BROKE CAMEL'S BACK.

3. BOARD FELT THT IF THEY WERE IN FACT TO MODIFY, CONSTRUCT AND INSTALL ALL ITEMS, WALLS,STAIRWAYS, DOORS, GLASS,

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ETC., ON PLANS, IT WOULD COST NEARLY FORTY THOUSAND JORDAN

DINARS, ABOUT ONE HUNDRED TWENTY THOUSAND DOLLARS, OVER AND ABOVE WHAT THEY COULD GET FOR NERELY RENTING SPACE TO ANOTHER TENANT. WITH BEIRUT EXODUS, AMMAN RAPIDLY BECOMING BOOM TOWN, TENANTS ARE NOT ELUSIVE.

4. LANDLORD SAID BOARD FELT IT HAD GONE FAR ENOUGH. DEAL WAS OFF AND HE FELT IT WAS WE WHO WENT BACK ON ORIGINAL COMMITMENT FOR SPACE AT ORIGINAL TERMS.

5. PAO REQUESTED HE FOLD OFF DECISION UNTIL AMBASSADOR RETURNED. WHEN LATTR DID RETURN, LANDLORD WAS IN LONDON. HIS ASSISTANT REFUSED COMMIT HIMSELF TO HOLDING SPACE UNTIL LANDLORD RETURNED AND AMBASSADOR COULD SEE HIM. WHEN LANDLORD FINALLY RETURNED, AMBASSADOR OFFERED SEE HIM IN LANDLORD'S OFFICE. LANDLORD CAME TO EMBASSY DEC. 24 WHERE AMBASSADOR SPOKE LONG AND ELOQUENTLY ON NEED PURSUE PROJECT, CITING PRIME MINISTER'S INTEREST, AMBASSADOR'S OWN WASHINGTON EFFORTS, ETC. UNDER SUCH PERTINENT PRODDING, LANDLORD AGREED SEE BOARD CHAIRMAN WITH WHAT LANDLORD ASSESSED AS QTE NINETY NINE PER CENT CHANCE ENDQTE OBTAINING CLEARANCE GO AHEAD WITH BASEMENT AND LIBRARY LEVEL. FIRST FLOOR OFFICE LEVEL ALREADY RENTED, HOWEVER, HE SAID THERE WAS OUTSIDE CHANCE WE COULD TALK PROSPECTIVE TENANTS INTO MOVING TO SOLE REMAINING UNRENTED THIRD FLOOR.

6. LANDLORD CONFIRMED TO PAO CHRISTMAS DAY WE COULD HAVE BASEMENT AND LIBRARY FLOOR BUT CHANCES SLIM FOR FIRST FLOOR. AMBASSADOR AND PAO AGREED WE MIGHT RETAIN USIS OFFICES IN PRESENT BUILDING, RENT EMBASSY ONE FLOOR FOR APARTMENTS, OR, ALTERNATIVELY, MOVE PAO, ADMIN SEC, SEVERAL LOCALS INTO EMBASSY, AND SANDWICH CAO, LOCAL SEC, INTO TWO NEW CENTER FLOORS.

7. WHEN PAO, ACCOMPANIED BY GSO, SAW LANDLORD NEXT DAY, HE INDICATED HE WOULD BE TAKING BACK BASEMENT QTE FREE SPACE ENDQTE GIVEN US MONTHS AGO TO MAKE ROOM FOR OIL TANKS AND ELEVATORS EMERGENCY GENERATOR. HE THEN TOLD US LIBRARY FLOOR HAD BEEN RENTED AND THAT HE HAD TOLD AMB AND PAO THIS DURING OUR PREVIOUS MEETING. THIS, OF COURSE, IS NOT TRUE, AND, WHILE ENTIRE PREVIOUS CONVERSATION TOOK UNCLASSIFIED

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PLACE IN EXCELLENT ENGLISH, WE BELIEVE THERE HAD BEEN HONEST MISUNDERSTANDING ON HIS PART. THERE IS ALSO LITTLE DOUBT THAT TREMENDOUS PRESSURE BEING EXERTED THROUGHOUT AMMAN AS DIRECT RESULT BEIRUT EXODUS WAS FINAL IMPETUS TO BOARD'S DECISION REFUSE US SPACE.

8. CONCLUDING, IT APPEARS VIRTUALLY CERTAIN WE CANNOT CONVINCE BOARD TO RECONSIDER REFUSAL RENT ACCEPTABLE SPACE

FOR NEW CENTER ON BASIS OF OUR CURRENT POSITION, ESPECIALLY AS WE HAVE LEARNED LANDLORD HAS ACCEPTED 75000 DOLS CHECK ADVANCE RENTAL FOR LIBRARY SPACE. FURTHERMORE,ALTERNATIVE (PARA 6) OF SPLITTING CENTER/USIS OFFICES BETWEEN PRESENT CENTER AND NEW ONE DOES NOT APPEAR FEASIBLE NOW THAT LIBRARY SPACE NOT AVAILABLE IN NEW BUILDING.

WE SEE OUR OPTIONS AS FOLLOWS: OPTION 1: INVESTIGATE POSSIBILITY OF RENTING SPACE IN ANOTHER BUILDING (WE ARE MAKING PRELIMINARY CONTACTS WITH OWNER OF ATTRACTIVE SITE IN NEW OFFICE BUILDING AT EVEN MORE ADVANCE STAGES OF CONSTRUCTION TWO BLOCKS FROM CURRENT SITE). WE OF COURSE, HAVE NO ASSURANCE THAT OWNERS WOULD BE INTERESTED IN RENTING TO US,THAT SPACE WOULD BE APPROPRIATE, OR THAT FINANCIAL TERMS WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE.

OPTION 2: REMAINING PRESENT LOCATION AND PERFORMING EXTENSIVE RE-MODELING CURRENT CENTER. THIS IS EASIEST BUT LEAST SATISFACTORY.

9. AT THIS POINT WE INCLINED FAVOR OPTION 1 AND, IF THAT FAILS WITHIN NEXT THREE MONTHS,FALLING BACK TO OPTION 2. WE NEED AGENCY'S REACTION,INCLUDING INDICATION OF WHAT FLEXIBILITY WE CAN HAVE REGARDING SPENDING SOMEWHAT BEYOND END OF CURRENT FISCAL YEAR, SHOULD THAT BECOME NECESSARY. THOMPSON

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